OPVL: Source Analysis

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| **Origin** | Who created it? Do we know anything about the author?  When was it created?  What country is it from? What else was happening at this time in this place (context)?  Is there a publisher? How reputable is this organisation? |
| **Purpose** | Why was it created? (related to type of document/audience)  Who is the intended audience?  Does it describe or analyse an event?  Was the author a participant? (Could this impact on their views?) |
| **Value** | Using this document, and your own knowledge of the wider context, show why this source is valuable (usually in relation to a particular question):   * What does it tell us about the author?   + Their actions   + Their attitudes   + Interpretations   + Is this consistent with others from the same time/place?   + Was the author’s action generally seen to be positive or negative? Are they trying to justify a controversial decision?   + How authoritative is the author/publisher? * What does it tell us about the event/topic/attitudes/time period?   + Why it happened   + Why it was important   + How it relates to other events / attitudes   + Is it indicative of what was happening? * Is the source even-handed or present only one side? Does it show a common one-sided attitude or interpretation?   + ‘This source is quite objective as it …’ or   + ‘It is a good example of the bias shown by…’   + Evidence of bias is not always a limitation: it can make it valuable as an example of biased attitudes |
| **Limitations** | What limits the value of this source for an historian trying to understand a particular aspect of history (read the question!)?   * Questionable authority/reliability of author/publisher * Limited information about author/context * What does it not cover that is important? (This might make it valuable as a source of bias if this is deliberate) * What aspects of the topic is it unlikely that this source could cover by its nature?   + ‘As a photograph, the source describes only a single point in time, which may have been staged. It cannot explain the reasons why *x* occurred.’ |
| **V/L** | A particular aspect of a source can be both a value and a limitation:  ‘This extract from the British PM’s journal is valuable as it outlines the British decision-making during the war, and their interpretations of German actions. Of course, as seen by the PM’s comments about *x*, a limitation of the source is that it is conjecture and does not always accurately represent German intentions (as expressed in Source B).’ |